

§ 259.5

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potable water no later than two hours after the aircraft leaves the gate (in the case of a departure) or touches down (in the case of an arrival) if the aircraft remains on the tarmac, unless the pilot-in-command determines that safety or security considerations preclude such service;

(4) For all flights, assurance of operable lavatory facilities, as well as adequate medical attention if needed, while the aircraft remains on the tarmac;

(5) For all flights, assurance that the passengers on the delayed flight will receive notifications regarding the status of the delay every 30 minutes while the aircraft is delayed, including the reasons for the tarmac delay, if known;

(6) For all flights, assurance that the passengers on the delayed flight will be notified beginning 30 minutes after scheduled departure time (including any revised departure time that passengers were notified about before boarding) and every 30 minutes thereafter that they have the opportunity to deplane from an aircraft that is at the gate or another disembarkation area with the door open if the opportunity to deplane actually exists;

(7) Assurance of sufficient resources to implement the plan; and

(8) Assurance that the plan has been coordinated with airport authorities (including terminal facility operators where applicable) at each U.S. large hub airport, medium hub airport, small hub airport and non-hub airport that the carrier serves, as well as its regular U.S. diversion airports;

(9) Assurance that the plan has been coordinated with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) at each large U.S. hub airport, medium hub airport, small hub airport and non-hub airport that is regularly used for that carrier's international flights, including diversion airports; and

(10) Assurance that the plan has been coordinated with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) at each U.S. large hub airport, medium hub airport, small hub airport and non-hub airport that the carrier serves, including diversion airports.

(c) *Code-Share Responsibility.* The tarmac delay contingency plan of the carrier under whose code the service is

marketed governs, if different from the operating carrier, unless the marketing carrier specifies in its contract of carriage that the operating carrier's plan governs.

(d) *Amendment of plan.* At any time, a carrier may amend its Contingency Plan for Lengthy Tarmac Delays to decrease the time for aircraft to remain on the tarmac for domestic flights covered in paragraph (b)(1) of this section, for aircraft to remain on the tarmac for international flights covered in paragraph (b)(2) of this section, and for the trigger point for food and water covered in paragraph (b)(3) of this section. A carrier may also amend its plan to increase these intervals (up to the limits in this rule), in which case the amended plan shall apply only to departures that are first offered for sale after the plan's amendment.

(e) *Retention of records.* Each carrier that is required to adopt a Contingency Plan for Lengthy Tarmac Delays shall retain for two years the following information about any tarmac delay that lasts more than three hours:

(1) The length of the delay;

(2) The precise cause of the delay;

(3) The actions taken to minimize hardships for passengers, including the provision of food and water, the maintenance and servicing of lavatories, and medical assistance;

(4) Whether the flight ultimately took off (in the case of a departure delay or diversion) or returned to the gate; and

(5) An explanation for any tarmac delay that exceeded 3 hours (i.e., why the aircraft did not return to the gate by the 3-hour mark).

(f) *Unfair and deceptive practice.* A carrier's failure to comply with the assurances required by this rule and contained in its Contingency Plan for Lengthy Tarmac Delays will be considered to be an unfair and deceptive practice within the meaning of 49 U.S.C. 41712 that is subject to enforcement action by the Department.

[Docket No. DOT-OST-2010-0140, 76 FR 23164, Apr. 25, 2011]

§ 259.5 Customer Service Plan.

(a) *Adoption of Plan.* Each covered carrier shall adopt a Customer Service

Plan applicable to its scheduled flights and shall adhere to the plan's terms.

(b) *Contents of Plan.* Each Customer Service Plan shall address the following subjects and comply with the minimum standards set forth:

(1) Disclosing on the carrier's website, at the ticket counter, or when a customer calls the carrier's reservation center to inquire about a fare or to make a reservation, that the lowest fare offered by the carrier may be available elsewhere if that is the case;

(2) Notifying consumers of known delays, cancellations, and diversions as required by 14 CFR 259.8 of this chapter;

(3) Delivering baggage on time, including making every reasonable effort to return mishandled baggage within twenty-four hours, compensating passengers for reasonable expenses that result due to delay in delivery, as required by 14 CFR part 254 for domestic flights and as required by applicable international agreements for international flights, and reimbursing passengers for any fee charged to transport a bag if that bag is lost;

(4) Allowing reservations to be held without payment or cancelled without penalty for a defined amount of time;

(5) Where ticket refunds are due, providing prompt refunds, as required by 14 CFR 374.3 and 12 CFR part 226 for credit card purchases, and within 20 days after receiving a complete refund request for cash and check purchases, including refunding fees charged to a passenger for optional services that the passenger was unable to use due to an oversale situation or flight cancellation;

(6) Properly accommodating passengers with disabilities, as required by part 382 of this chapter, and other special-needs passengers as set forth in the carrier's policies and procedures, including during lengthy tarmac delays;

(7) Meeting customers' essential needs during lengthy tarmac delays as required by §259.4 of this chapter and as provided for in each covered carrier's contingency plan;

(8) Handling "bumped" passengers with fairness and consistency in the case of oversales as required by part 250 of this chapter and as described in each

carrier's policies and procedures for determining boarding priority;

(9) Disclosing cancellation policies, frequent flyer rules, aircraft seating configuration, and lavatory availability on the selling carrier's website, and upon request, from the selling carrier's telephone reservations staff;

(10) Notifying consumers in a timely manner of changes in their travel itineraries;

(11) Ensuring responsiveness to consumer problems as required by §259.7 of this chapter; and

(12) Identifying the services it provides to mitigate passenger inconveniences resulting from flight cancellations and misconnections.

(c) *Self-auditing of plan and retention of records.* Each carrier that is required to adopt a Customer Service Plan shall audit its own adherence to its plan annually. Carriers shall make the results of their audits available for the Department's review upon request for two years following the date any audit is completed.

[Docket No. DOT-OST-2010-0140, 76 FR 23165, Apr. 25, 2011]

EFFECTIVE DATE NOTE: At 76 FR 45181, July 28, 2011, the revision of §259.5(b)(4) printed at 76 FR 23165, Apr. 25, 2011 was delayed until January 24, 2012. For the convenience of the user, the revised (b)(4) is set forth as follows:

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(b) * * *

(4) Allowing reservations to be held at the quoted fare without payment, or cancelled without penalty, for at least twenty-four hours after the reservation is made if the reservation is made one week or more prior to a flight's departure; or more

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§ 259.6 Posting of Contracts of Carriage, Tarmac Delay Contingency Plans and Customer Service Plans on websites.

(a) Each U.S. air carrier that has a website and each foreign air carrier that has a website marketed to U.S. consumers, and that is required to adopt a contingency plan for lengthy tarmac delays, shall post its current